Author, poet, and screenwriter Sherman Alexie was named one of The New Yorker’s 20 top writers for the 21st century. The New York Times Book Review described him as “one of the major lyric voices of our time,” and Men’s Journal called him “the world’s first fast-talking, wisecracking, mediagenic American-Indian superstar.”

After growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Washington, a college professor recognized Alexie’s “intensity of language, passion, and energy.” A gifted orator, he tells tales of contemporary American Indian life laced with razor-sharp humor, unsettling candor and biting wit.

Alexie’s first novel, Reservation Blues, won Booklist’s Editors Choice Award for Fiction. His second, Indian Killer, was a New York Times Notable Book. The Toughest Indian in the World won the 2001 PEN/Malamud Award, honoring excellence in the art of storytelling. Ten Little Indians was a national bestseller and Publishers Weekly Book of the Year.

His recent books include: The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian - a 2007 National Book Award winner in Young People’s Literature; the novel Flight; and Face, a collection of poems. His 2009 book of short stories, War Dances, won the PEN Faulkner Award.

Alexie wrote and produced the film, Smoke Signals, based on his book, The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, which won the Audience Award and Filmmakers Trophy at the 1998 Sundance Film festival. In 2002 he made his directorial debut with The Business of Fancydancing. He is currently working on a sequel to The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven titled Fire with Fire and a sequel to True Diary called The Magic and Tragic Year of My Broken Thumb.

Alexie received Washington State University's Highest Alumni Award, recognizing the importance of his Native American voice to a broad audience, and Pushcart Prize. He released Blasphemy, an anthology of new stories and beloved classics, in October 2012. Shortly thereafter, Kirkus Reviews, The New York Times, and NPR all included Blasphemy in their lists of the top books of 2012. He was recently awarded a 2014 Literature Award by The American Academy of Arts and Letters.


Absolutely smashing! Beyond my wildest expectations. He had us all laughing for two hours. But beyond that, he changed people’s thinking ---which is my goal for bringing people of his caliber here. Anyone who saw him will never be the same.

Bismarck State College
Suggested Topics

Without Reservations: An Urban Indian's Comic, Poetic & Highly Irreverent Look at the World

Security, Sovereignty, Selfishness: How to be a 21st Century American Nomad

The Business of Fancydancing: Poems, Stories, Punch Lines and Highly Biased Anecdotes

The Partially True Story of the True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
Books and Other Works

**Blasphemy: New and Selected Stories Published 2012**
Alexie showcases his many talents in Blasphemy, where he unites fifteen beloved classics with fifteen new stories in one sweeping anthology for devoted fans and first-time readers. Included here are some of his most esteemed tales, including “What You Pawn I Will Redeem,” in which a homeless Indian man quests to win back a family heirloom; “This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona,” a road-trip morality tale; “The Toughest Indian in the World,” about a night shared between a writer and a hitchhiker; and his most recent, “War Dances,” about a man grappling with sudden hearing loss in the wake of his father’s death. Alexie’s new stories are fresh and quintessential, about donkey basketball leagues, lethal wind turbines, a twenty-four hour Asian manicure salon, good and bad marriages, and all species of warriors in America today.

**The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Published 2007**
Winner of the National Book Award and his first book for young adults, Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, which is based on the author’s own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by acclaimed artist Ellen Forney that reflect the character’s art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live. (Source: Powells)

**What I've Stolen, What I've Earned Published 2013**

**War Dances Published 2009**
Fresh off his National Book Award win, Alexie delivers a heartbreaking, hilarious collection of stories that explores the precarious balance between self-preservation and external responsibility in art, family, and the world at large that took home the PEN Faulkner Award. In a bicoastal journey through the consequences of both simple and monumental life choices, Alexie introduces us to personal worlds as they transform beyond return. Brazen and wise, War Dances takes us to the heart of what it means to be human. (Source: Amazon.com)
Biography

Sherman J. Alexie, Jr., was born in October 1966. A Spokane/Coeur d’Alene Indian, he grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, WA, about 50 miles northwest of Spokane, WA. Approximately 1,100 Spokane Tribal members live there.

Born hydrocephalic, Alexie underwent a brain operation at the age of 6 months and was not expected to survive. When he did beat the odds, doctors predicted he would live with severe disabilities. Though he showed no signs of this, he suffered severe side effects, such as seizures throughout his childhood. In spite of all he had to overcome, Alexie learned to read by age three, and devoured novels, such as John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, by age five. All these things ostracized him from his peers, though, and he was often the brunt of other kids’ jokes on the reservation.

As a teenager, after finding his mother’s name written in a textbook assigned to him at the Wellpinit school, Alexie made a conscious decision to attend high school off the reservation in Reardan, WA, about 20 miles south of Wellpinit, where he knew he would get a better education. At Reardan High he was the only Indian, except for the school mascot. There he excelled academically and became a star player on the basketball team.

In 1985 Alexie graduated Reardan High and went on to attend Gonzaga University in Spokane on scholarship. After two years at Gonzaga, he transferred to Washington State University (WSU) in Pullman, WA.

Alexie planned to be a doctor and enrolled in pre-med courses at WSU, but after fainting numerous times in human anatomy class, he realized he needed to change his career path. That change was fueled when he stumbled into a poetry workshop at WSU.

Encouraged by poetry teacher Alex Kuo, Alexie excelled at writing and realized he’d found his new path. Shortly after graduating WSU with a BA in American Studies, Alexie received the Washington State Arts Commission Poetry Fellowship in 1991 and the National Endowment for the Arts Poetry Fellowship in 1992.

Not long after receiving his second fellowship, and just one year after he left WSU, two of his poetry collections, *The Business of Fancydancing* and *I Would Steal Horses*, were published. Alexie had a problem with alcohol that began soon after he started college at Gonzaga, but after learning that Hanging Loose Press agreed to publish *The Business of Fancydancing*, he immediately gave up drinking, at the age of 23, and has been sober ever since.
Alexie continued to write prolifically and his first collection of short stories, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, was published by Atlantic Monthly Press in 1993. For this collection he received a PEN/Hemmingway Award for Best First Book of Fiction, and was awarded a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award. In March 2005, Grove Atlantic Press reissued the collection with the addition of two new stories.


In the past, Alexie has done readings and stand-up comedy performances with musician Jim Boyd, a Colville Indian. He and Boyd collaborated to record the album *Reservation Blues*, which contains the songs from the book of the same name. In 1996 Boyd and Alexie opened for the Indigo Girls at a concert to benefit the Honor the Earth Campaign.

In 1997, Alexie embarked on another artistic collaboration. Chris Eyre, a Cheyenne/Arapaho Indian, discovered Alexie's writing while doing graduate work at New York University's film school. Through a mutual friend, they agreed to collaborate on a film project inspired by Alexie's work. The basis for the screenplay was "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona," a short story from *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Shadow Catcher Entertainment produced the film. Released as *Smoke Signals* at the Sundance Film Festival in January 1998, the movie won two awards: the Audience Award and the Filmmakers Trophy.

After success at Sundance, *Smoke Signals* found a distributor, Miramax Films, and was released in New York and Los Angeles on June 26 and across the country on July 3, 1998. In 1999 the film received a Christopher Award, an award presented to the creators of artistic works "which affirm the highest values of the human spirit." Alexie was also nominated for the Independent Feature Project/West (now known as Film Independent) 1999 Independent Spirit Award for Best First Screenplay.

In the midst of releasing *Smoke Signals*, Alexie competed in and won his first World Heavyweight Poetry Bout competition in June 1998, organized by the World Poetry Bout Association (WPBA) in Taos, New Mexico. He went up against then world champion Jimmy Santiago Baca. Over the next three years he went on to win the title, becoming the first and only poet to hold the title for four consecutive years. The WPBA closed its doors in early 2005.
Known for his exceptional humor and performance ability, Alexie made his stand-up debut at the Foolproof Northwest Comedy Festival in Seattle, WA, in April 1999, and was the featured performer at the Vancouver International Comedy Festival's opening night gala in July 1999. He continues to pursue his work in comedy.

In 1998, he participated with seven others in the PBS Lehrer NewsHour “Dialogue on Race” with President Clinton. The discussion was moderated by Jim Lehrer and originally aired on PBS on July 9, 1998. Alexie has also been featured on Politically Incorrect, 60 Minutes II, and NOW with Bill Moyers, for which he wrote a special segment on insomnia and his writing process called "Up All Night."

In February 2003, Alexie participated in the Museum of Tolerance project, "Finding Our Families, Finding Ourselves," an exhibit showcasing the diversity within the personal histories of several noted Americans, and celebrating the shared experiences common to being part of an American family, encouraging visitors to seek out their own histories, mentors and heroes. This project was featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show, "Our Big American Family with Billy Crystal and Dr. Maya Angelou," which originally aired in January 2003, and on which Alexie was a guest.

Alexie was the guest editor for the Winter 2000-01 issue of Ploughshares, a prestigious literary journal. He was a 1999 O. Henry Award Prize juror, was one of the judges for the 2000 inaugural PEN/Amazon.com Short Story Award, and a juror for both the Poetry Society of America’s 2001 Shelley Memorial Award and the Poets and Writers "Writers Exchange 2001" Contest. He most recently was a juror for the 2005 Rae Award, and has served as a mentor in the PEN Emerging Writers program.

He was a member of the 2000, 2001, 2005 & 2006 Independent Spirit Awards Nominating Committees, and has served as a creative adviser to the Sundance Institute Writers Fellowship Program and the Independent Feature Films West (now Film Independent) Screenwriters Lab.

Alexie was the commencement speaker for the University of Washington's 2003 commencement ceremony. In 2004 and 2006 he was an Artist in Residence at the university and taught courses in American Ethnic Studies.

His recent honors include receiving the 2007 National Book Award in Young People’s Literature for The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. Other awards and honors include the 2007 Western Literature Association’s Distinguished Achievement Award and the 2003 Regents' Distinguished Alumnus Award, Washington State University's highest
honor for alumni. His work was selected for inclusion in The Best American Short Stories 2004, edited by Lorrie Moore, and Pushcart Prize XXIX of the Small Presses. His short story "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" was selected by juror Ann Patchett as her favorite story for the The O. Henry Prize Stories 2005. He holds honorary degrees from Seattle University (doctor of humanities, honoris causa - 2000) and Columbia College, Chicago (1999).

Alexie’s other books include Flight (April 2007, Grove/Atlantic) which is a sci-fi novel and a parable of war featuring an edgy teen outcast named Zits on the verge of committing a colossal act of violence, and The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian (September 2007, Little, Brown) which is Alexie’s first young adult novel. This novel is a coming-of-age, interracial comedy for young adults based on Junior’s first year at an all-white high school.

In April 2009 Hanging Loose Press released his first full collection of poems in nine years, Face. He released War Dances, a book of short stories, in Fall 2009, which won the PEN Faulkner Award. He wrote a sequel to The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven entitled, Fire with Fire, and a sequel to True Diary entitled, The Magic and Tragic Year of My Broken Thumb, about Junior’s sophomore year in high school. He released Blasphemy, an anthology of new stories and beloved classics, in October 2012. Kirkus Review named it one of the Top 25 Best Fiction books of 2012.